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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 55th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 3 November 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. KALPAGE (Vice-President)	(Sri Lanka)
later:	Mrs. ESCALER (Vice-President)	(Philippines)
later:	Mr. DANGUE REWAKA (Vice-President)	(Gabon)

- Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [79] (continued)

  (a) Report of the Conference

  (b) Report of the Secretary-General

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Kalpage (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79 (continued)

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE (A/CONF.151/26. vols. I-IV and vol.II/Corr.1)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/598 and Add.1)

Mr. RAZALI (Malaysia): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio last June, was attended by virtually all countries. More than 120 Heads of State or Government participated. There was a drawn-out preparatory process that involved Governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations. That such an international effort could be marshalled in order to focus discussion in an integrated manner on environment and development must be seen as a major, unprecedented achievement.

Unlike the Stockholm Conference of 1972, UNCED elevated development issues to an equal footing with the issue of environment. UNCED took definitive steps to promote a global partnership for sustainable development, placing people at the centre of this challenge. It was a historic opportunity, of which we availed ourselves against the backdrop of major political, economic and social transformations that placed fresh demands on issues such as polarization between North and South, poverty and the neglect of the South and the fragile state of the planet, and with an enhanced public awareness world wide.

However, the actual results of Rio, in terms of written commitments and initiatives, fell far short of the promise raised. To many, the serious gap between the promise and the actual results amounts to a major failure of UNCED, arguably of historic proportions.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

Even as we extol the accomplishments of UNCED, we cannot gloss over the shortcomings of UNCED. The Convention on Climate Change, for example, is disappointingly weak, revealing political timidity and the absence of resolve on the part of industrialized countries. Key issues of financial resources and technology have not been adequately addressed. Neither is there a determined, clear response to issues of global warming, dumping of hazardous wastes in developing countries, consumption patterns in developed countries and nuclear-related issues. Agenda 21 fails to advocate accountability for some of the key actors in global environmental destruction, such as transnational corporations. A strong code of conduct is required to regulate the activities of the transnational corporations. The challenge before us now is to promote and implement real change from the national to the international levels.

UNCED was hardly forthcoming in addressing the inequalities of the international economic structure. The follow-up to UNCED must make up for this lapse, examining issues such as the reverse South-North outflow of resources, improved South terms of trade and the reduction of the debt burden. Such reform is essential if the South is to gain the necessary economic space to implement a transition to ecologically sound and socially equitable development. Also, we must work for a total ban on the export of hazardous wastes and dirty industries from the North to the South. On the issue of nuclear weapons, if compared to the Stockholm Conference, UNCED went backwards rather than forwards. UNCED failed to address what needs to be done in the North in order to shift towards ecologically sound development, such as dealing with the problems of the unsustainable production and consumption patterns of the North.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

Another serious shortcoming of UNCED was the absence of leadership from the North. The differences of view between developed countries resulted in the lack of a clear sense of direction from that group. Some industrialized countries took negative positions. Instead of forward movement on the core issues, one could detect a tendency, on the part of those countries, to hide behind each other, as was evidenced in respect of the issue of financial resources.

With regard to the road ahead, it is clear that the transition to sustainable development involves major changes in the way in which we look at our use of nature. This is a complex exercise, and one of its basic components is scientific cooperation, particularly with regard to access to environmentally friendly technologies and, above all, the building up of the technical and institutional capacity of all countries to implement Agenda 21.

These issues received a great deal of systematic attention in the UNCED process and are now reflected in a series of programmes that make up three chapters of Agenda 21. In many ways, the successful implementation of Agenda 21 requires that these cross-cutting programme areas, which deal with the knowledge base for sustainability, receive the most consistent and systematic attention at national, regional and international levels.

The implementation of Agenda 21 programmes will clearly involve costs, which must be seen in the context of what would be the consequences of inaction. It can no longer be contested that developing countries require new and additional financial resources. The flow of new resources will serve the common interests of the developed countries and the developing countries.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

However, at present there is a substantial gap between the estimated $125 billion that is required annually by the South to implement Agenda 21 and the annual official development assistance of $55 billion currently provided to the South. Without the means of implementation - the provision of financial resources, the transfer of technology and related issues, such as capacity-building and institutional development - Agenda 21 will be meaningless.

Many delegations at UNCED called for capacity-building programmes designed to help countries to develop their policy infrastructures and institutions, to train their human resources and to facilitate the participation of all stake-holders in decision-making processes. The ability of a country to follow a sustainable development path is determined by the capacity of its people and its institutions. In this context, my delegation fully supports the initiative to launch Capacity 21 - a capacity-building programme in support of Agenda 21. The UNCED secretariat has estimated the cost in the area of capacity-building as being between $300 million and $1 billion. Fulfilment of this responsibility will require resources in addition to those available from the core and special funds of the United Nations Development Programme and other existing mechanisms.

On financial resources, the developed countries reaffirmed at the Rio Summit that they were committed to reaching the accepted target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance and to augmenting their aid programmes with a view to reaching this target as soon as possible. Some developed countries have agreed to reach the target by the year 2000.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

But this was not enough, as specifics were absent. The affirmation by the developed countries has to be further defined in terms of specific commitments so that the enhanced flows of aid to developing countries are predictable and provide a sound basis for long-term planning. We must translate the many promises made in Rio into specific commitments. We must also start the process of developing new sources of funding, because the steps we have taken still do not provide any guarantee that the larger needs will be met.

The current situation is not encouraging as, at the end of UNCED, we are still not in a position to estimate the amount of the new moneys committed by the North. The indications are that they fall far short of the estimated amount. New moneys must also be generated through new sources of funding, such as the reallocation of funds wasted in existing subsidies or in support for non-environmentally-sound activities.

Agenda 21 proposes the use of all available funding sources and mechanisms. Amongst these is the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank. Special consideration should be given to the idea of an earth increment to the tenth replenishment of IDA. The provision of additional funding through IDA, particularly for anti-poverty programmes and related areas of sustainable development, is vital to the effective fulfilment of Agenda 21. In many ways the tenth replenishment of IDA is a test of the credibility of the commitments made in Rio.

However, the latest developments in this area are not encouraging, and the spirit of Rio appeared to be missing at the World Bank meeting held recently in Washington. Malaysia is disappointed at the lack of sufficient response from developed countries. I refer to the absence of any announcement,

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

in clear and specific terms, of commitment to provide the new and additional financial resources required for the successful implementation of the various activities under Agenda 21.

On the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), arrangements must now be made for the proposed restructuring agreed to in chapter 33 of Agenda 21 - restructuring involving such matters as universal participation, transparency, flexibility in expanding the scope of the Facility, and coverage and predictability in the flow of funds without new forms of conditionality. At Rio leaders of major countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) committed themselves to increasing substantially the financial resources of GEF and to transforming the facility into a universal and transparent funding mechanism for the incremental costs associated with global environmental benefits.

It was in these circumstances that developing countries agreed to accept GEF as an interim mechanism to fund implementation of the provisions of the Conventions on climate change and biodiversity. However, it is important to note that GEF would provide only a small, though strategically critical, portion of the required new and additional financial resources - only 2 to 10 per cent of the total required.

My delegation looks forward to participation in the December meeting, in Côte d'Ivoire, of the Participant Assembly of GEF intended to restructure the mechanism in line with UNCED decisions. We believe that the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development will have an important role to play in monitoring the activities and outputs of GEF in relation to the implementation of UNCED decisions that involve utilization of the funding mechanism.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

The transfer of environmentally sound technologies is integral to the efforts of developing countries to protect the environment while promoting growth and development. This, in our view, could be done by making use of international information networks, collaborative and human resources, capacity-building, environmental-impact assessment and sustainable-development planning. My delegation attaches great importance to the agreement referred to in chapter 34 of Agenda 21, which, among other things, highlights the need of developing countries for convenient access to environmentally sound technologies.

Malaysia looks forward to the establishment, at this session of the General Assembly, of the Commission on Sustainable Development under the Economic and Social Council. Some Rio issues with regard to institutional arrangements are still unresolved. My delegation hopes that these issues will be properly addressed by the ad hoc working group on the UNCED follow-up. We are of the view that the Commission should be composed of 53 Member States elected by the Economic and Social Council for three years on the basis of equitable geographic distribution. There should also be arrangements for non-governmental organizations and other interested groups to contribute to the multifaceted work of the Commission.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the Commission on Sustainable Development in monitoring the implementation of Agenda 21 and all other aspects of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), it is essential that the Commission have close links with all relevant organs, programmes and organizations of the United Nations system, including the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Bretton Woods institutions. Arrangements have to be worked out to ensure that the three entities take consistent and reinforcing decisions on sustainable development. UNCED has given us an opportunity for the interfacing of the Bretton Woods institutions and GATT with the United Nations system.

My delegation supports a separate and identifiable secretariat to service the Commission; the secretariat should be headed by an Under-Secretary-General reporting directly to the Secretary-General. We also look forward to taking part in the negotiations on other important resolutions expected at this session, such as those on the international convention to combat desertification, on the global conference on sustainable development of small-island developing States, on the international conference on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, and on the overall outcome of UNCED.

Malaysia stands ready to participate and contribute in the work of the the Commission on Sustainable Development, since such high expectations are being placed at its door. While we are open to all contributory efforts, we are determined to ensure the intergovernmental nature of the Commission. We must caution against not only excessive expectation but also against moving too fast and precipitiously in its work. The Commission should be seen as an evolving mechanism that must obtain progressively the confidence of Governments. We would be worried if the functions of the Commission were

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

likened to that of the Security Council. We hold strongly that the Commission should not be dominated in such a way that development is determined through solely an environmental prism. Also we would, with others, resist any efforts to erode the integrated approach and to "sectoralize" away from the Commission issues such as finance and trade.

For the countries of the South, UNCED provides a crucial opportunity to work for a general policy orientation of the international agenda after a neglect of over 40 years. UNCED also provides us in the South with a sense of purpose to demonstrate our commitment to the environment and the state of the planet, given a collective commitment to enhance development in the South. The countries of the South have a direct interest and responsibility to ensure that their own environmental resources are protected and used wisely in the process of industrialization and development. We believe that the South, through UNCED, has been successful to some degree in placing the issue of development for proper address. It is now necessary for us in the South to organize ourselves to influence and steer the UNCED follow-up. We need to push further the sharing of the overarching conceptual framework of policy-making and action. We expect resistance that will make the future course not easy, but we in the South will insist on a clear and a shared role on managing global interdependence.

On the environment we will not allow ourselves to be the sole targets of change and corrective actions. Our development cannot be hindered by impositions which shift the burden of protecting the ecology to the developing countries. We would insist on changes in the North and the process of self-correction in the North's production and consumption patterns.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

In order to study and review the various implications of UNCED decisions at the national level, my Government has taken steps to examine the various measures required for sustainable development. These include sensitizing all Malaysians to the decisions in Rio in terms of national commitments through a series of seminars and other efforts. What we hope to achieve in Malaysia is a clear national consensus to formulate overall policies that satisfy the developmental as well as the environmental aspects of national planning. Malaysia views sustainable development as an evolutionary process that would be phased in within the short-, medium- and long-term time-frame. We believe that environmental imperatives need not be incompatible with development objectives and would like to stress that an integrated approach on a national basis would require and benefit from inputs and participation from the non-governmental sector, such as business communities, academicians and other interest groups. On forestry, we would operate on the basis of the forest principles agreed to at UNCED and wish to call upon all countries to contribute towards efforts which would put in operation the principles agreed to in Rio.

Finally, Malaysia welcomes the outcome of Rio. The Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, the forest principles, and the Conventions on Climate Change and Biological Diversity are agreements achieved at the highest level that we must now translate into implementable programmes. Malaysia readily shares in this commitment. We recognize the shortcomings but believe that the road from Rio can be constructive, given commitment by all.

Mr. WISNUMURTI (Indonesia): At the outset let me express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his important introduction to his report now before us. We would also like to thank the Chairman of the Group of 77 for articulating the position of the Group. We meet at a unique juncture in history. The end of the cold war has ushered in a new era of promise and challenge. The ambitious agenda of our current session of the General Assembly clearly reflects the myriad interests and concerns associated with the changes inherent to the emerging new era. Peace and security are now seen as much in economic as in political and military terms and the degradation of the environment is considered a real and serious threat to the very survival of humanity.

It is against this dynamic backdrop that we take up item 79, "Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development". Central to our tasks is the need to build upon the momentum registered at Rio and to translate its commitments and outcome into tangible action. The major outcomes of the Conference, the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, have squarely placed sustainable development at the heart of international relations and have called for a new global partnership to give it concrete effect. The outcome has thus set a unique and solid framework within which the international community can pursue its critical goals in the field of environment and development.

It has also reinforced the growing recognition of interdependence between developed and developing countries for ecological survival and developmental imperatives. And it has clearly demonstrated that a lasting solution to global environmental degradation can only be achieved through shared responsibility in the implementation of the concept of sustainable development. Moreover, UNCED reflects a global consensus and political

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commitment at the highest level on how we, the international community, should effectively address the situation of worsening poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and the alarming deterioration in many of the world's vulnerable ecosystems.

The Rio Conference is over, but the formidable task of translating its outcome into action now stands before us. We cannot allow the momentum generated at Rio to be squandered. Rather the challenge before us is to ensure the concrete implementation of its landmark outcome while at the same time striving to build an international economic environment conducive to achieving these ends. Allow me therefore to address the questions of follow-up action that are required of this current session of the United Nations General Assembly. In doing so, my delegation would like to focus only on certain aspects of the follow-up process.*

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* Mrs. Escaler (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Wisnumurti, Indonesia)

Agenda 21 constitutes a comprehensive and far-reaching programme designed to ensure sustainable development for the 1990s and beyond. As such, its implementation at the national, regional and international levels is of crucial importance. Thus to achieve these objectives and to monitor the implementation of the Agenda, it was agreed in Rio to establish the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development as an intergovernmental mechanism. Its purpose was to achieve the vital environmental and developmental goals outlined in Agenda 21. In view of the great importance of the work of the high-level Commission to all member countries, it is imperative that its membership reflect the widest possible representation.

For this reason Indonesia is in favour of a convergence of views on membership size emerging during consultations among the membership, which stands at 53. We trust it will not only act as a follow-up to Rio but also provide full coordination for all United Nations bodies in the implementation of Agenda 21. The formulation of its modalities represent the next step. The Group of 77 has already presented its positions on this matter.

We would particularly like to emphasize the position of the Group on the importance of the Commission's functions regarding the adequacy of both funding and mechanisms, together with the transfer of technology and the necessity of capacity-building, so that implementation of Agenda 21 can be secured. We look forward to addressing the Secretary-General's report on institutional arrangements during the forthcoming meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group dealing with the matter.

We would like to recall in this connection that at the Tenth Summit, recently held in Jakarta, the non-aligned countries adopted a Declaration in

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which they expressed their concern with the new and increasing threats to the environment, which, if left unchecked, could jeopardize the long-term survival of the ecosystem and undermine the world's ecological balance. They confirmed their longstanding conviction that, since the issues of environment and development were inseparably linked, they should be addressed both in an integral manner and on the basis of common but differentiated responsibility. They also attached great importance to the effective implementation of agreed policies and the need for constant monitoring. In this context, in order to maintain the momentum generated at Rio, the Heads of State or Government could meet at appropriate and mutually agreed upon times under the aegis of the United Nations General Assembly.

Another urgent agenda item requiring concerted follow-up action by the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly is that of combating desertification. Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 contains specific programmes for dealing with this serious problem. Its harmful consequences for human life and the environment at the national, regional and global levels are a source of deep concern to my delegation.

In this context, as is well known, we fully support the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. Yet my delegation cannot hide its disappointment with the lack of progress in implementing this important plan. Failure to do so is largely due to the lack of adequate financial resources. As stated by the Secretary-General in his report, funds allocated to drought and desertification activities are not commensurate with the scale of the problems.

However, we are pleased to note that, with the advent of the UNCED process, the level of global awareness of desertification and drought facing

(Mr. Wisnumurti, Indonesia)

many developing countries, particularly in Africa, has been increased dramatically. In view of the seriousness of these problems, it is our sincere hope that the international community will strive to increase the volume of resources and the level of assistance for these problems as directed in the Agenda.

Therefore my delegation would like to reaffirm its commitment to the efforts for combating desertification outlined in chapter 12, and, on behalf of the non-aligned countries, to fully support the establishment of the intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification, particularly in Africa. That convention should be finalized by June 1994.

Allow me now to turn to a topic of crucial importance to UNCED's follow-up. Undoubtedly, the availability of new and additional financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technology on the basis of preferential and concessional terms are essential requirements for achieving sustainable development in developing countries. Since progress in sustainable development is the sine qua non for a meaningful contribution by developing countries for the preservation of the global environment, the absence of adequate financial flows and the lack of access to technology could jeopardize the significant achievements already reached in Rio.

Agenda 21 has in fact clearly spelled out the crucial requirements. It states that the provision of effective means, inter alia financial resources and technology, to the developing countries will serve the common interests of both developed and developing countries, including their future generations. In this light, we therefore trust that the developed countries and others in a

(Mr. Wisnumurti, Indonesia)

position to do so will give positive effect to this decision of UNCED at the current session of the General Assembly. It is important, however, that these efforts not be stymied by restrictions of conditionality. We also trust that the developed countries will take solid steps towards facilitating developing countries in their gaining access to and the transfer of environmentally sound technology.

Another important issue for attention in this regard is that of island developing countries. Such countries, particularly small and remote ones, are intimately associated with numerous difficulties concerning the environment and development. Many such difficulties arise from such factors as their vulnerability to natural disasters, their lack of natural resources and their fragile ecosystems, together with the high cost of infrastructure and public services. In addition, their highly limited internal markets and their heavy dependence on imports represent severe constraints. Moreover, global warming resulting in the rise of sea-levels poses special threats to the existence of these territories.

As an archipelagic State, combined with the longest coastline in the world, Indonesia is deeply concerned with the potentially disastrous impact of global warming and rising sea-levels. We therefore fully support the convening of a global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing countries to take place in 1993. This first global conference should be designed to elaborate strategies and measures to enhance the sustainable development of small island developing countries in the context of increased national and international efforts to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development.

(Mr. Wisnumurti, Indonesia)

Never before have the issues of forest and forestry generated such interest as they have today. Not only are they important resources for development, but they are also an important component of the global ecosystem. Therefore the conservation of forests is not an objective per se but rather an instrument to be employed on the larger stage of achieving national and international development priorities.

Indonesia, as a country blessed with vast and bountiful forest resources, is acutely aware of the need to protect and conserve existing forests and to promote their sustainable management. Such resources are essential for both promoting development and preserving the global environment. A proper balance between these two essential dimensions should be sought on the basis of the right of all countries to develop their natural resources according to their own socio-economic needs, as well as taking into account their national policies for sustainable development.

In this context, we welcome the non-legally-binding statement of principles for the sustainable management of global forests adopted at Rio. For our part, in Indonesia we are acutely aware of the endangered rainforests and have taken concrete steps towards sustainable forest management, including cooperation with other countries and parties to achieve these worthy goals. I would like to add that we strongly believe that the ability of the developing countries to tackle these concerns ultimately depends upon whether or not a supportive economic environment is in place.

(Mr. Wisnumurti, Indonesia)

In conclusion, let me reiterate that while we are pleased with what was accomplished at Rio, we cannot afford to be complacent. Much more needs to be done. Today's challenge is for the international community to take effective action towards the achievement of the goals set in the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21. The Non-Aligned Movement is seriously interested in the matter and ready to participate actively in the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development.

Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand): The good news is that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process has not only given rise to a good deal of thinking about a new "global partnership for sustainable development", but has also turned out a global work plan to tackle the interrelated economic, social and environmental problems identified in Agenda 21, which was adopted at Rio. The Agenda recommends actions at every level, from the local to the global, to address environmental problems and promote sustainable development into the twenty-first century. It is a commendable beginning, even if it is not the last word on the subject.

The underlying assumption of sustainable development is that everyone has a common stake in current actions and future outcomes. In an interdependent world, development must be global if it is to be sustainable. The vision of Rio can be realized only if the world community works together as a whole.

We draw satisfaction from the fact that Agenda 21 gives high priority to the implementation of what can be called win-win policies that build on the complementarity between poverty reduction, economic efficiency and sound environmental management. In particular among the win-win elements, an international trading system that genuinely recognizes comparative advantage is critical, indeed indispensable, to the achievement of sustainable

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

development. Without an open trading system, sustainable development is a contradiction in terms. Predictability in trade is as significant as predictability in aid.

UNCED has provided the United Nations with a central role in carrying forward the Rio commitments. The establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development is in itself a test of new commitment, as we endeavour to give practical effect to the framework agreed at Rio.

The aims are ambitious: a dynamic institution that will enable Governments working through the United Nations system to achieve an integrated approach to future development and environment activities. As previous speakers have said, we are building the room when the house - the United Nations - is being remodelled.

My delegation listened with great interest to the Secretary-General's contribution yesterday. It provides, we believe, real food for thought. Reform is absolutely vital for our overall United Nations system, but for us the early and effective establishment of the Commission is an absolute priority. The Commission must be set up with sufficient flexibility to evolve over time, to take full advantage of institutional changes in the United Nations system and to respond to external changes as international understanding of sustainable development issues broadens. Through its work the Commission may also contribute to the ongoing reform process by highlighting areas where rationalization of effort and activity is possible.

But the Commission on Sustainable Development must not be the child of the United Nations system alone. Just as the Rio process engaged the broadest range of stakeholders in the environment and development areas, so must the Commission reach out to and embrace other institutions and regional

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

organizations. It must have a robust relationship with international financial institutions, especially the Global Environment Fund, and regional development banks. Other organizations, too, such as those within New Zealand's neighborhood of the South Pacific region, should be able to develop close links with the Commission.

New Zealand attaches importance to Commission attributes of widespread participation, impartial assessment, transparency, equity and accountability. If the consensus reached at Rio is not to slip away, it is imperative that the full complement of countries, non-governmental organizations and other major social groups that contributed so meaningfully to the UNCED process remain fully engaged. We believe that the membership of the Commission must accordingly be broadly representative of countries and regions, with rotational equity for all within geographical entitlements. All countries, great and small, should be able to take a turn, if they want it, on the Commission; no countries can or should assume automatic permanency.

New Zealand is also concerned to ensure that clear guidelines for the effective participation of non-governmental organizations and major groups in the work of the Commission are established at this session of the General Assembly. The Commission secretariat will also, we envisage, have an important liaison function in relation to non-governmental organizations and other major groups, keeping them informed of the Commission's work and collecting and assessing information provided by them for its use.

The neutrality of the Commission on Sustainable Development will also be critical to the effective discharge of its review functions. Fair and equitable governance of the Commission itself, and indeed of related

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

institutions like the Global Environment Fund, is indispensable to the necessary confidence on all sides that will underpin its effectiveness.

If the Commission is to act as a forum for sharing national experience for the mutual benefit of the global community, it must, as envisaged in Agenda 21, generate reports from all countries. Sensitivity about sovereignty has, quite rightly, been raised. The starting-point should be a shared commitment to the principles of sustainable development affirmed at Rio. Ensuring that the exercise is worthwhile in substantive terms - that individual countries obtain necessary information on emerging problems and possible solutions - should provide a real incentive for all Governments voluntarily to submit national information to the Commission.

Responsibilities for achieving Agenda 21 objectives must be allocated equitably among nations and implemented equally. Participants will quickly grow disillusioned without tangible evidence that progress is being made and that all parties, including donors and recipients, are playing their part. At a national level most countries, including my own, are taking a hard look at what must be done to implement Agenda 21. The Commission on Sustainable Development is charged, critically, with ensuring the shared political will for change and providing practical and clear direction on how to achieve our goals.

In addition to fixing the organizational arrangements for the Commission, the Assembly is charged with a number of other immediate tasks in the UNCED follow-up. I wish to touch here quickly on a few matters that New Zealand believes are of significance.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

First, a negotiating process must be established to prepare a Convention to combat desertification and drought. While it does not confront all countries directly, a solution to these scourges will boost efforts to achieve globally based sustainable development. In the Pacific region the closely related issue of freshwater resources is a concern in this overall context.

Secondly, Agenda 21 has also focused further attention on the problems relating to the conservation and management of living marine resources on the high seas. Over-exploitation of resources on the high seas have a devastating impact on resources within exclusive economic zones. These resources are of crucial importance to the economic development of coastal and island States. They are essential to the achievement of broader sustainable development objectives.

UNCED's decision to convene a conference to deal with such problems is therefore most timely. The New Zealand delegation is at present working with others on a draft resolution, procedural in nature, which incorporates appropriate arrangements for the convening in 1993 of a United Nations conference on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks.

Thirdly, we welcome also the decision to convene the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Countries. The special problems faced by island States have been recognized in successive General Assembly resolutions. Problems related to size, isolation and environmental vulnerability, while not confined to island developing countries alone, are in character and combination undoubtedly unique. The Global Conference will clearly have a key role in identifying the strategies that will assist islands to develop on a sustainable basis into the twenty-first century.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

We have set ourselves an ambitious agenda. Our efforts to achieve UNCED objectives must be clearly targeted. As a general principle, the Commission on Sustainable Development and its secretariat should not take on tasks that can be adequately handled in other forums. Their relatively scarce resources should be employed in the areas where the Commission on Sustainable Development has a comparative advantage, namely drawing together information across sectors, programmes and national borders, which will assist in the advancement of sustainable development objectives.

The principle of subsidiarity, much discussed at Rio de Janeiro, has of course much broader application. Tasks should be handled at the most decentralized or lowest level at which they can be handled effectively. We all face the challenge of translating this global framework into action at the local level. It is at the local community level that the key decisions for the implementation for much of Agenda 21 will have to be taken.

The tasks facing us are indeed many. Agenda 21 provides a daunting work plan. We must establish a good international framework for follow-up action through the decisions of tnis session of the General Assembly on UNCED matters. And, of course, we must also strive at the national level, as well as cooperate globally, to achieve the goals set for it by UNCED.

Mr. DANGUE REWAKA (Gabon) (interpretation from French): It is a pleasure for my delegation to be taking part in this debate devoted to consideration of the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992. We should like once again to thank the Brazilian Government for the quality of the organization which it provided for us and which contributed to creating conditions conducive to the success of the Conference. Our thanks also go to

(Mr. Dangue Rewaka, Gabon)

Mr. Maurice Strong and Ambassador Tommy Koh, who guided the UNCED preparatory process with such efficiency.

We consider that the Rio de Janeiro Summit laid the foundations for new international cooperation in the fields of the environment and sustainable development. The adoption of Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the forest principles and the signing of the Conventions on Climate Change and Biological Diversity are fine illustrations of that. My country welcomes this and will do everything in its power to translate the undertakings it made in Rio de Janeiro into deeds.

The success of Agenda 21 will in the first instance depend on the commitment of Governments, but it will also depend on the active participation of non-governmental organizations and of the bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. Its implementation will require a substantial input in terms of new and additional resources which will enable the developing countries to cover the extra expenditure incurred by measures taken to solve national, regional and global ecological problems, and will enable the international institutions concerned to strengthen their capacity to intervene.

It is therefore of the utmost importance for developed countries which have not achieved the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of GNP to be able to achieve that objective before the year 2000.

It is also essential that the Global Environment Fund be restructured as soon as possible in accordance with chapter 33 of Agenda 21, with the aim, in particular, of extending its spheres of action, encouraging universal participation, and providing on favourable terms new and additional financial resources, especially to the developing countries.

(Mr. Dangue Rewaka, Gabon)

It would also be appropriate for lasting solutions to be found to the debt problems of the low- and middle-income countries in order to give them the means of promoting sustainable and environmentally rational development.

Among the agreements reached at Rio de Janeiro, my country attaches particular importance to the statement on forest principles, which should serve as a basis for international cooperation in this field. Gabon, in fact, has 85 per cent forest cover. The forestry sector alone represents more than 40 per cent of our overall exports, apart from oil, and so plays an undeniable economic and social role. It employs nearly 25 per cent of the active labour force. The redynamization of this sector will, among other advantages, stem the rural exodus which has concentrated approximately 47 per cent of the population in urban areas.

Well before the Rio de Janeiro Conference Gabon undertook to institute a policy for managing and conserving its forestry resources by pursuing activities such as reafforestation - since the year 1990 - with an indigenous species called okoumé or gaboon mahogany; improvement in the natural planting of gaboon mahogany; projects concerning the biology of gaboon mahogany, agroforestry, the conservation and rational utilization of natural forest ecosystems, and the inventory and management of forests and plantations.

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Furthermore, it has established a programme to put in place a network of preserves and areas closed to exploitation. This network covers 1,800,000 hectares, which in time will increase to 4 million hectares, under the provisions of current legislation. Of course, Gabon will not be able successfully to carry out this vast programme without the firm support of the international community.

In accordance with chapter 38 of Agenda 21, the General Assembly has been entrusted at its forty-seventh session with determining the specific operational modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development - in other words, its composition, its relationship with the other intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system that deal with environment and development issues, as well as the frequency, the duration and the venue of its sessions.

In this context, my delegation firmly supports the Secretary-General's proposals on the operational modalities of the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development, contained in his report. My delegation intends to participate actively in the work of that Commission.

Our shared objective is to ensure that the commitments undertaken in Rio will lead to concrete action in order to guarantee better standards of life for our populations and to safeguard the lives of future generations. In this connection, I should like to recall that in March 1993 my country will host the first African conference of ministers for planning and the environment to followup UNCED.

Mr. KRYZHANIVSKY (Ukraine): In recent years, issues relating to the development of international nature conservation and to the solution of the most acute ecological problems have been among the major concerns of the

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General Assembly. But at the present session the Assembly faces an especially difficult task: to establish the principal organizational foundation for implementing the decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which, in our view, has become the starting-point of an arduous but quite real process of the transition of humankind to sustainable development and to a new, ecological, global way of thinking.

The delegation of Ukraine would like to comment on the principal results of the Conference as well as on some aspects of environmental protection on the global, regional and national levels.

It is well known that opinions as to the results of the world ecological forum in Rio de Janeiro differ, depending, to a large extent, upon expectations concerning it. We deem it unfair to form an opinion about such a major event as UNCED only on the basis of the financial aspect of the matter and thus regard its outcome as "a great failure" or "a great success".

In our view, the success of the Conference is first of all proved by the fact that, because it was held at the political summit level, the process of creating a general understanding of the necessity of environmental restoration and preservation and of attaining sustainable development received an unprecedented and forceful impetus. For two weeks Rio de Janeiro attracted the world's attention with its focus on environmental protection issues. The world community, including scientific and business circles, the "green movement" and individuals, is now taking a more active and vigorous part in dealing with issues of environmental concern. Group actions have been undertaken by non-governmental environmental organizations.

All this leads us to the firm belief that the spirit of Rio, born at the Conference and figuratively referred to by the Secretary-General,

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Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, will not be forgotten, and that the proposed model of ecological order will function effectively, providing optimum conditions of life and development for every human being and humankind in general, in harmony with the unique nature of the Earth.

The Conference provided an environmental assessment of major ecological problems, summed up the experiences of States in solving them, defined the means to ensure our planet's environmental survival, and outlined guidelines for international cooperation in this field for the next several decades. Its basic documents, such as the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, being the results of compromise, may not seem perfect to, or totally satisfy, us or our colleagues from other countries. But their elaboration has convincingly brought us closer to an era of stable development and testifies to the fact that humankind not only has reached a critical stage in its realization of the full extent of the imminent danger to the environment, but is eager to avoid it through joint efforts.

Ukraine supports Mr. Strong's expression at the Conference of the necessity to continue the work leading towards an Earth charter, with the principles of the Rio Declaration as its basis. We hope that by 1995 this work will have been successfully completed and that an Earth charter will have become a worthy contribution to the preparation of the United Nations fiftieth-anniversary celebrations.

Ukraine considers that global environmental protection efforts should be based on a solid foundation of international law. Therefore, we believe that there can be no doubt that the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which were actively prepared over the last

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few years and signed at the Conference, should be considered as achievements of the Conference. We also believe that work on the protocols to those Conventions should be actively undertaken, and Ukraine is prepared to contribute to this process.

We consider that the legal standards that determine the activities of the United Nations in the field of preventive nature-protection measures should be further developed with the aim of more effectively implementing UNCED's decisions.

In this respect, Ukraine deems it necessary to draw the General Assembly's attention to the need to work out a set of international legal documents that would deal with, among other things, environmental crimes, environmental emergency areas, mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of environmental disputes, international environmental monitoring and control with international on-site inspections, and expansion of the exchange of environmentally safe technologies. We support the idea of creating an institution with international responsibility in regard to environmental damage, and in particular an international ecological court of justice, as well as rapid-response ecological forces in case of environmental emergencies and disputes, including the "United Nations Green Helmets" idea.

The delegation of Ukraine realizes that the implementation of the provisions of Agenda 21 will be a labour-intensive and complex process that will require the efforts of the entire United Nations system. From our point of view, the structure of the United Nations bodies that deal with environmental protection has become outdated in many respects and should be improved. We regard the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development as the first step along this road.

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It is also necessary, in view of our environmental goals, to scrutinize and make use of the Security Council's potential as well. On the basis of the Secretary-General's report, the Security Council could devote at least one session each year to the issues related to the rising environmental instability as a potential threat to peace and security.

We are convinced that the final results of the Conference will mainly depend on how actively joint environmental actions will be supplemented with the required action on a national scale. The issue of nature conservation should be dynamically integrated into national economic policy. Based on the decisions adopted in Rio de Janeiro, Ukraine will work out its national strategy for attaining sustainable development and take account of ecological security priorities when adopting economic decisions.

For many countries, and primarily the developing countries, providing environmental safeguards and the transition to sustainable development will require mobilizing additional material and financial resources, which, under present conditions, is beyond their powers to realize without external assistance. Unfortunately, the Conference in Rio de Janeiro did not give a definite answer to that question.

We are deeply convinced that every country is primarily responsible for its socio-economic development, including environmental protection. At the same time, rendering assistance to realize transition to sustainable development should rather be considered a required contribution to the global system of ecological security. New approaches are necessary to find sources for its realization.

Ukraine supports the idea that ecological conversion can be one of the non-traditional sources - that is, the partial cancellation of foreign debts

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with the consent of donor States with a view to obtaining means to improve environmental protection and the ecological modernization of production. We are glad that such an approach has found a positive response among developed countries. Proceeding from the "polluter pays" principle, we stand for providing financial means for the joint financing of environmental action and the free exchange of environmentally safe and sound technologies and relevant information between States in order to establish a regional and global network of scientific information centres and data banks on environmentally sound technologies within the framework of the United Nations.

In our view, there is a considerable potential to provide development and additional resources, with the aim of preserving and restoring the environment, including that of the developing countries, in the practical realization of the "disarmament for development" principle, which would entail diverting enormous financial means from the military to the civil sphere. The delegation of Ukraine notes with satisfaction that through dialogue the Conference found an acceptable compromise and reflected the interests of all groups of countries, including the specific interests of countries with transition economies. We are convinced that the earliest possible integration of Ukraine and other countries with transition economies into the world economic system will be in the interests of their peoples and will promote stable and predictable economic development in the interests of all countries.

Years will pass before the importance of the Rio ecological forum is fully assessed. But it is already clear today that its convening was yet another proof of the renaissance of the United Nations, which is transforming itself into an ever more universal centre for the joint action of its Members.

Mr. NUÑEZ MOSQUERA (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): Today, the speedy and growing deterioration of the environment is possibly the most serious long-term threat to the human race as a whole and in particular to the so-called third world. Together with the ever-present risk of nuclear destruction, it is the gravest danger to all humanity. As regards the underdeveloped countries, it is one of the factors that most exacerbate the already frightful living conditions of hundreds of millions of people.

The Summit Conference in Rio de Janeiro was undoubtedly a gathering of crucial importance. At the highest possible level and with greater participation than ever before, the Governments of the world adopted decisions aimed at curbing the most widespread and destructive aggression ever committed by man against the balance of the living systems of our planet.

The commitment to sustainable development and the definitions related to it are among the Conference's most important achievements. It is a well-known fact that the patterns of production and consumption of the opulent societies are the basic cause of the deterioration of the environment. The wealth and well-being enjoyed by some of the citizens of the world are based on unsustainable models of development that the non-renewable resources of our planet will not be able to support much longer. In the underdeveloped world, underdevelopment and poverty themselves are the main factors of added pressure on the environment. It is therefore fair and timely that the Heads of State or Government have recognized the right to development, which, as has been stated, must be exercised so as to respond equitably to the development and environmental needs of present and future generations.

After Rio, the task before us is in no way reduced. We now have an immense body of commitments and goals that, although limited, given the

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magnitude of the problem, will have to be implemented if the first steps are to be taken towards a healthier life. As part of that undertaking, it will be necessary to break down the strong resistance that the industrialized countries showed in Rio to the establishment of commitments in the area of transferring new and additional financial resources and technology to the developing world. It will be necessary to define more clearly the institutional mechanisms to ensure the follow-up and implementation of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21. It will also be necessary to work harder to achieve pending agreements on desertification, on the urgent problems of small island States, and on the management and protection of low-lying coastal regions.

The greatest danger is that, following the Conference, we should lose the political impetus and the social and moral pressure that led to very important decisions. This session of the General Assembly offers us the first opportunity to avoid such a mistake. Cuba's position regarding the characteristics, mandate and composition of the Commission on Sustainable Development is correctly reflected in the document submitted in that respect by the Group of 77 for these deliberations. Among the points contained therein, I should like to underscore a few to which we attach special importance.

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The complexity of the subject of sustainable development and of the decisions taken at Rio attest to the need for the Commission to have the broadest and most equitable representation possible of the States Members of the Organization and for the Commission to guarantee the participation of observers under the existing rules and with completely open, transparent working methods. The distribution of posts on the Commission must be based on the recognized principles of equitable geographical distribution. Any proposal or formula that would deviate from such an arrangement must be rejected.

Agenda 21 outlines quite specifically the functions of the Commission, both in the specific decisions of chapter 38 regarding institutional arrangements and in explicit and implicit references in the various thematic chapters, such as chapters 33 and 34. We hope that at this session the General Assembly will fulfil the mandate to specify the Commission's functions, in accordance with the decisions adopted under the various chapters of Agenda 21. If the Commission on Sustainable Development is to be responsible for monitoring the implementation of Agenda 21, it will have to base its work on the premise recognized in Rio that the implementation of the enormous programmes of sustainable development will require the developing countries to be provided with substantial new and additional financial resources. The monitoring and review of the financing process is thus an unavoidable responsibility of the Commission if it is to be truly relevant.

The support given by the Secretariat to the work of the Commission and in general to the complex mandates of the Conference will be decisive for the attainment of the goals that have been outlined. For this reason we agree with the proposal that the mechanism to be created should be a separate and identifiable entity within the structure of the Secretariat of the

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Organization and should be headed by an Under-Secretary-General reporting directly to the Secretary-General.

The decision on the location of the secretariat and the venue of the meetings of the Commission is a matter that should reflect first and foremost the objective of guaranteeing the best conditions and opportunities for the due participation and follow-up of all Member States. It is both detrimental and offensive to the small, poor countries that the debate on this subject revolves around the preferences of the rich countries and the balance between them, when in fact they already monopolize the right to host multilateral bodies. Cuba considers that the interests enunciated by the small countries, particularly the alliance of small island States, should be taken very much into account in the deliberations on this question.

Forming a part of our agenda, in the context of the implementation of the results of the Summit, will be the convening of a global conference on sustainable development of small island States. For those who have been involved in the negotiations for the last two years and and who are familiar with the vast amount of information that has been circulated on the particular vulnerability of small island States, it will be easy to understand the importance of such a conference for those countries. Our aim would be to gain the support of the international community for the achievement of the objectives of sustainable development under the difficult circumstances of countries that, in addition to being small and vulnerable, are poor and underdeveloped.

Among the decisions of the Rio Summit, there were undoubtedly some that yielded very limited results because of the difficulty of reaching firm agreement between all the participants, and those results will sooner or later require greater specificity. Chapter 33 of Agenda 21, on financing resources

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and mechanisms, is the one we most need to work on. We are in favour of the General Assembly's specifying, at this session, the steps and modalities for financing resources that will lead to the complete fulfilment of the provisions of Agenda 21.

No less important, in our view, is the obligation to guarantee the suitable, not-for-profit transfer to the developing countries of the technologies needed to create conditions and capacities for environmentally sustainable development. Until that objective is met, steps towards environmental protection will be very limited.

Cuba, a small third-world country which carries out its struggle for development under uniquely adverse circumstances and which requires, like all underdeveloped countries, international technological and financial assistance, can nevertheless share with the world, particularly the underdeveloped world, the experience of what has been achieved in our country in environmental conservation and protection, as well as the results achieved by our people in various fields reflected in Agenda 21, such as health, education, equity and social justice. We hope that those who are able to will also be willing to share. I can assure the Assembly that efforts to comply with the decisions of the historic Rio Summit are already a reality in our country.

Mr. CHEW (Singapore): This debate comes exactly five months after the historic United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro. It provides a good opportunity to take stock of what was achieved at Rio. The Rio Conference marked the beginning of a new phase of international cooperation for integrated consideration of environmental and developmental issues at the international, regional and national levels. However, the success of the Rio Conference will ultimately be judged by the

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faithful implementation of the commitments agreed to, in particular Agenda 21. To put it simply, if the Rio Conference is to be considered a success, then steps must be taken to ensure the effective implementation of Agenda 21.

The effective implementation of Agenda 21 requires several factors. I should like to highlight three at this stage.

The first is financial resources. The secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development estimated the average annual cost of implementing Agenda 21 in the developing countries to be over $600 billion, including about $125 billion to be spent on grant or concessional terms. There is no doubt that the implementation of the various sustainable-development programmes in developing countries will require the provision of substantial new and additional financial resources.

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External funding for the implementation of Agenda 21 is critical. The developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, will require additional external funding, including increased official development assistance. In this respect we welcome the reaffirmation by the developed countries of their intention to reach the accepted United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. However, the bulk of financing for the implementation of Agenda 21 is expected to come from a country's own sources, from both the public and the private sectors. A country's ability to mobilize resources for sustainable development depends primarily on its ability to promote economic growth and development. At the international level free trade and access to markets is fundamental to economic growth and development, in particular in the developing countries. An open, non-discriminatory, multilateral trading system will enable all countries, and particularly the developing countries, to improve the standard of living of their peoples through sustained economic development. Environmental protection can come about only with economic growth and development.

The second major requirement for the successful implementation of Agenda 21 is the existence of an appropriate plan of action and strategy for sustainable development at the national level. It is necessary to establish a clear policy framework that integrates environment and development and identifies national and local priorities as well as ways and means to build the capacity and capability to implement Agenda 21.

The articulation of a clear national plan of action is essential for at least two reasons. First, a clear plan of action is necessary to attract the necessary external funding for the implementation of Agenda 21. Secondly, a

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national plan is necessary to build consensus at all levels of the society to implement Agenda 21. The main task of any national plan of action should be to build endogenous capacity. Here, we have found in Singapore that human-resource development through education and technical training is crucial for capacity-building. Another important element for capacity-building is the transfer of technology and the relevant know-how. In the long term, the successful implementation of Agenda 21 requires easy access to technological information and capabilities. This would enable individual countries to expand and build their own capacity to promote sustainable development.

In Singapore the Government has attached particular importance to national programmes and actions. We began our own programmes for environmental protection some 30 years ago and have put into place an effective system of infrastructure and legislation for environmental protection. We have also formulated a "Green Plan" that charts the strategic directions for environment and development policies for the next decade. Singapore would be pleased to share its experiences in sustainable development with other countries. We also hope to be able to facilitate the transfer of environmental technology in the Asia-Pacific region.

The third requirement is an effective institutional framework at the international level for the promotion of sustainable development, the implementation of Agenda 21 and the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). In the view of my delegation, there are at least four major issues with regard to international institutions.

First, there is the question of setting up an intergovernmental mechanism for the follow-up of UNCED. In this respect we urge the early establishment of the high-level functional Commission for Sustainable Development.

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Secondly, there is the question of complementarity, cooperation and coordination, both at the intergovernmental and the Secretariat levels, between United Nations bodies, agencies and programmes for the promotion of sustainable development. Here, we should like to stress the importance of placing the new Commission on Sustainable Development within the context of the ongoing restructuring and revitalization exercise in the economic, social and related fields.

Thirdly, there is the question of the link between any international institutional arrangements and multilateral financial institutions. On this point, we should like to underscore the need for close and effective cooperation and exchange of information between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions in the implementation of Agenda 21. There is a strong link between financial support and substantive action. That linkage must be reflected at the level of international institutions.

Fourthly, I should like to stress the fundamental importance of the role of the Secretary-General in the follow-up process of UNCED. The continued strong and effective leadership of the Secretary-General is crucial to giving the issue of sustainable development the importance and high-level consideration it deserves and requires within the United Nations system. The Secretary-General should be the focal point for all sustainable development matters within the United Nations system.

The establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development will be one of the most important decisions to be made by the General Assembly at this session. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the institutional arrangements for UNCED follow-up. My delegation would also like strongly to endorse the position paper put forward by the Group of 77 on the Commission on

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Sustainable Development. I should nevertheless like to make two additional observations.

The first concerns the size and membership of the proposed Commission. The Commission will have an important role in forging a global partnership for cooperation in the field of sustainable development. It is therefore important that its size and membership be large enough to allow a broad spectrum of both developed and developing countries to participate. My delegation supports the position of the Group of 77 for a 53-member Commission elected on the basis of equitable geographical representation. To ensure full participation, representatives of non-member States of the Commission should have observer status.

My second observation concerns the location of the secretariat of the Commission. The location of the secretariat should be guided by the basic principle that it should be accessible to all States, in particular the smaller developing States. Similarly, the venue for the meetings of the Commission should be fixed in a location where the largest number of countries are represented.

It is imperative to set in motion quickly an effective follow-up process and mechanism for the implementation of Agenda 21. As the preamble to Agenda 21 states, humanity stands at a defining moment in history. If we do not seize this moment and set aside our differences for the sake of sustainable development, we shall never be forgiven by future generations.

Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) stands out in retrospect as a towering landmark in the field of international cooperation. In the long and arduous negotiations that preceded the event, many doubted that, as the saying goes,

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the game would be worth the candle, that the results would be commensurate to the time and effort invested. Yet, in the end, the Conference has offered to the world a blueprint, however tentative and ambitious, for bringing about its salvation. It explored the limits of mutual agreement and produced a common Agenda for the sustainable development of all nations.

The States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for whom I have the honour to speak today - namely, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Guyana - participated actively in the search for meaningful consensus.*

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* Mr. Dangue Rewaka (Gabon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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In preparation for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), our Governments encouraged a process of consultation with relevant institutions, including non-governmental organizations. They assembled a Special Task Force to consider the particular concerns and needs of the region. Within the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Group of 77, of which we are members, we sought to make common cause with all developing countries. The statement made yesterday by the Chairman of the Group of 77 to the General Assembly reflected the priorities that we continue to attach to the several agreements arrived at in Rio. If I might, however, I would like to highlight some of the Caribbean Community's perspectives on post-UNCED cooperation.

Ever since Columbus' encounter with the Caribbean, the world has looked upon our region somewhat as an earthly paradise. And rightly so, for the rosary of islands stretching between the mainlands of Belize to the North and Guyana to the South are set like precious jewels in the Caribbean diadem. Their tropical beauty, evidenced by their lush vegetation, white sands and azure waters, is celebrated. It is no wonder that the Caribbean is a most popular tourist destination.

However, behind the proverbial silver lining there is a cloud, for, while nature has been bountiful in its blessings on the region, there is also a dark side to its gifts. These lands are unfortunately prone to disasters - both natural and man-made - that wreak havoc on their populations. Battered by violent hurricanes, ravaged by over-exploitation and eroded by the sea, the environment is frequently under assault. The precious coral reefs that adorn the Caribbean Sea are put in jeopardy. And as if this were not enough, recent

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times have brought the additional danger of shipments of hazardous waste passing through our waters.

As Père Labat reminded the Caribbean some 250 years ago

"You are all together, in the same boat, sailing on the same uncertain sea."

As a result of these threats to our fragile ecosystem, we are forced to spend an inordinate amount of our scarce resources to arrest further degradation. At the same time, we are obliged to provide our peoples with the basic necessities of life. These twin responsibilities were acknowledged by the First CARICOM Ministerial Conference on the Environment when it stated

"Central to all our environmental concerns is our shared desire for Man's survival in a manner that is both in harmony with nature and consistent with human welfare."

The CARICOM States are therefore pleased that this symbiotic link between the environment and development has been fully recognized and enshrined in the declaration of principles that issued from Rio. We are satisfied that Agenda 21 represents an ambitious and comprehensive attempt to translate our aspirations into reality. We realize, of course, that this cannot be done all at once. We would therefore urge that Agenda 21 be examined with an eye to establishing our priorities for action. In many cases, the Agenda has set specific targets and timetables. It is important that these be scrupulously followed and that the dynamic momentum achieved at Rio be sustained.

Undoubtedly, our most urgent task is the creation of a commission on sustainable development to satisfy the clear need for a suitable body to ensure the effective follow-up of all UNCED decisions and to monitor the progress of the implementation of Agenda 21. Given these important functions,

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it is imperative that the commission be clearly democratic in concept, composition and operation. It may be recalled that, while it was agreed in Rio to make the commission a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, this was done largely for the sake of administrative convenience. The general understanding, however, is that the commission should be autonomous and high level in order to function effectively. Its membership should be sufficiently large to allow for adequate representation by developing countries. In this regard, the CARICOM countries believe that it should have 53 seats, decided on the basis of the Council formula as applied to the high-level Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

With regard to the functions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, we would wish to give special importance to national capacity-building in developing countries. An independent provision should therefore be made under financing that would require the Commission to monitor assistance to these countries so as to ensure their capability to undertake their obligations under Agenda 21. In so far as the service secretariat is concerned, we are in agreement with the structure proposed by the Group of 77. We would, however, ask that due attention be given to the need for gender-balance. Moreover, the Commission should ideally be located in New York so as to facilitate maximum participation by the developing countries.

CARICOM fully endorses the proposal for a review meeting in 1997. The programme of work of the Commission in the initial stages would seem to suggest, however, that at least in the first two or three years, the Commission should aim to meet at least twice a year. In any event, a programme of meetings up to 1997 would seem to be highly desirable. We would ask that in preparing for these meetings, the Commission should seek to facilitate the continuous participation of developing countries, in

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particular, small island States and the least developed countries. The CARICOM countries intend to play a full and active role in the work of the Commission and will therefore seek appropriate representation on it.

Looking beyond the creation of the Commission, we would wish to call attention to several important follow-up conferences on the environment and development calendar. It is not too early to begin addressing our minds to the organization of these meetings. The CARICOM countries understandably have a particular interest in the convening in 1993 of the first global conference on the sustainable development of small island States. The aim of this conference is, inter alia, to develop and strengthen inter-island, regional and inter-regional cooperation and information so as to reduce the inherent vulnerability of small States. We urge full support of the conference, which our sister State of Barbados has kindly agreed to host.

Of special concern to CARICOM is the issue of general marine and integrated coastal zone management. The problems of global warming and sea-level rise are already being felt in some of our countries, which are forced, as a consequence, to wage a constant and costly battle with the sea in order to protect valuable coastal areas and economic resources. The endangered marine resources contained in our exclusive economic zones are also essential to our economic and social development. As recognized in Agenda 21, there is a dire need for international cooperation and coordination at all levels

> "to support and supplement national efforts of coastal States to promote integrated management and sustainable development of coastal and marine areas." (A/CONF.151/26 (vol. II), para. 17.10)

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It is hoped that the conference recommended at Rio to address this issue can be held before 1994. At stake is the very viability and survival of some of our countries.

Although Agenda 21 does not prescribe any specific action to be taken by the Assembly in order to ensure the sustainable use of forests, it is none the less important for the international community to abide as of now by the statement of principles agreed upon in Rio. We must also proceed to put in place the review mechanisms to determine to what extent these principles have served our purpose and to chart a plan for the management of our forests. This entails the continuing examination of the need for and feasibility of appropriate international arrangements

> "to promote international cooperation on forest management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, including afforestation, reforestation and rehabilitation". (A/CONF.151/26 (vol. II), para. 11.12 (e))

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Forest conservation, management and development are viewed by our Governments as critical elements of a strategy for environmental rectitude. In this context CARICOM has endorsed fully the Iwokrama project for the sustainable development and conservation of 900,000 acres of virgin Amazonian rain forest in the heart of my country's hinterland. This project has been launched as one of regional interest, with the collaborative involvement of the Commonwealth Secretariat, other Commonwealth Governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international agencies.

With respect to those countries which are under threat of desertification, the CARICOM countries repeat their call for the early introduction of an international convention on halting desertification, particularly in Africa, the region most affected by this dreadful scourge. At the same time we would urge the early convening of an intergovernmental conference under United Nations auspices with a view to promoting effective implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory species. This forum should provide a timely opportunity for considering means of improving cooperation on fisheries among States and formulating appropriate recommendations. The work and the results of the conference should be fully consistent with the law of the sea Treaty which we trust will shortly come into force.

Two important Conventions which have already been agreed upon by the international community - namely on biodiversity and climate change - now demand that an impetus be given to their early ratification and implementation. In the case of the climate change treaty, we should now contemplate the development of new protocols, especially one aimed at limiting

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the emission of greenhouse gases and at dealing with the harmful consequences of sea-level rise. It is understood that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change is due to meet in early December to prepare for the convening of a conference of the parties. With regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity, an area which is the common concern of humankind, the contracting parties must now proceed, according to their particular capabilities, to formulate strategies for its practical implementation.

This quick review of the post-UNCED agenda again points up the indispensability of two important provisions, namely the transfer of appropriate technology and adequate financial resources to enable developing countries to fulfil their obligations under the Rio compact. Developing countries must have access to environmentally sound technologies on a grant or concessional basis in order to deal with these responsibilities. They must equally have at their disposal new and additional resources to be able to satisfy the several financial requirements. We would therefore appeal to our developed partners to address these issues urgently and, as was envisaged at Rio, announce their commitments at this session of the General Assembly.

It has been estimated that the resources needed annually for the adequate implementation of Agenda 21 in developing countries is of the order of $600 billion. This may seem an astronomical sum but with the cooperation of both developed and developing countries the financial needs can be met. Obviously, given the principle of differentiated responsibilities, the developed countries will be expected to make the much greater contribution. This is as it should be since the burden of responsibility on developing

(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

countries will be especially onerous. Our share has to be measured not only by our portion of the financial costs but also by the sacrifice resulting from the constraints inherent in the need to balance the use of our natural resources and the demands of environmental conservation. In the reckoning too, one must take into account the burden faced by our societies in the cost of debt-servicing and the undertaking of major structural adjustment programmes.

We therefore call upon the developed countries to attain quickly the long-stipulated goal of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) for official development assistance. This step alone would realize a significant amount towards reaching our target. We would also expect an appreciable tenth replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) enhanced by an Earth increment especially earmarked for environmental purposes. We would at the same time encourage the exploration of all possible sources of funding. The successful launching of Agenda 21 will demand substantial early commitments of concessional financing for developing countries. We must act on this now.

The Global Environment Facility will be an important mechanism for channelling resources to the twin areas of the environment and development. We should not delay the task of restructuring it to enable it to operate in optimal fashion. In order to do so, it should have three essential characteristics. First, it should be universal in membership with broader and more equitable representation. Secondly, its resources should be more accessible to the needs of small island and low-lying States. And, thirdly, there should at all times be transparency and accountability in its operations.

(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

Still on the subject of financing, the CARICOM countries would wish to welcome the provisions outlined by UNDP for inputs under Capacity 21. National capacity-building effectively to implement Agenda 21 is a priority requirement of most, if not all, developing countries. The CARICOM countries certainly have specific needs in this area and therefore welcome the mandate which has been given to UNDP and all multilateral institutions for the provision of assistance. As I have already stated, one of the most important tasks for the Commission on Sustainable Development would be to monitor the implementation of this mandate.

These are some of the broad perspectives which CARICOM will bring to bear during the more detailed discussions of these issues in the Second Committee. It is to be hoped that the spirit of cooperation and consensus which was manifest in Rio will pervade these deliberations so that at the end of the day we can say that another positive step has been taken towards realizing the aspirations and goals of UNCED. For our part, CARICOM countries are determined to continue their close collaboration and coordination to ensure the full and rapid implementation of Agenda 21.

As we stand at the threshold of the twenty-first century, we cannot but be conscious of the perilous stage which civilization has reached. In his relentless pursuit of progress man has recklessly ravaged his environment. As a result the world is today under serious threat of irreparable destruction. UNCED has enjoined us to act collectively to avert this disaster. Agenda 21 offers a rescue plan. We must together begin to implement it. In the words of one of our Caribbean poets:

(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

"Like a jig shakes the loom;

"Like a web is spun the pattern;

"All are involved!

"All are consumed!"

We are thus destined - developed and developing - to work together for our survival and that of the planet Earth. This is an obligation which cannot safely be postponed.

Mr. MUSUKA (Zambia): Zambia welcomes the opportunity to participate in this debate marking the first stage in the international community's efforts to initiate the follow-up process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in June this year at Rio de Janeiro.

My delegation would like to extend its appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the Rapporteur-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Foreign Minister of Algeria, for the comprehensive introduction of the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

In welcoming the report, I should also like to pay tribute to all participants in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as those who participated in the preparatory process. As observed by the Secretary-General in his report, the Conference was unprecedented in many respects which makes it a unique achievement in the process of international cooperation.

The international community came out of Rio de Janeiro with a helpful agenda that can usher our world into a new age of sustainable development - our basic condition for evolving the common resolve that should commit the international community to safeguarding the environment for present and future generations.

In this respect, the task of the Assembly is to harness the spirit of Rio de Janeiro and evolve an innovative system of international cooperation for sustainable development. My delegation deems it imperative for nations of the world to form a formidable alliance fully dedicated to fostering sustainable development in order appropriately to implement the agenda agreed upon in Rio de Janeiro and where necessary to build upon it.

Laudable efforts that aim at facilitating international cooperation for

(Mr. Musuka, Zambia)

sustainable development started in Rio de Janeiro as reflected in the report of the Conference. In looking beyond Rio de Janeiro, we also see hopeful signs of greater willingness among Governments to pool their influence and come up with an intergovernmental structure that will be at the heart of the post-Rio process.

However, let us all remember that institutional mechanisms will only be a platform for implementing the multifaceted agenda for sustainable development. Of crucial concern to the developing countries is whether or not they will get the "environmental space" they crucially need to participate in the agenda for sustainable development.

This concern has lingered on because it defines the capacity of developing countries to take up the additional burden of protecting the environment while attempting to implement the difficult agenda of development.

The concept of sustainable development, suggesting an idea of full integration of environmental and developmental concerns, cannot be carried to its logical conclusion if one part of the international community remains unable to rise to the challenges placed upon it without risking retrogression. In this regard, greater willingness to cooperate among nations of the world must be followed by greater commitment to the fundamentals that give substance to the imperatives of cooperation and, in the process, generate greater confidence in the mutual responsibility of moving forward into the future.

The massive problems of drought, desertification, the dumping of toxic waste and poverty, all of which have an adverse impact on the environment, still stand out as major concerns of the developing countries. The agreed initiative to negotiate an international convention to combat desertification,

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which is before the current session of the General Assembly, will be an instrument by which to add to the hopes of millions of people in developing countries, particularly in Africa, eking out an existence in the harsh conditions of vanishing life-support systems. Drought and desertification, being inseparable, demand that the proposed international convention include adequate provisions to assist afflicted countries in withstanding the effects of droughts and rehabilitating ravaged ecosystems.

There are other concerns that will affect our transition to sustainable development. Through preferential technology transfers, the international community possesses the capacity to assist many countries of the world to initiate a development process that transcends the patterns that have hitherto been environmentally degrading. The process of education and training for technological advancement, complemented by the enhanced savings potential of developing countries through external debt reduction and multilateral trade liberalization in the Uruguay Round, can generate incentives for developing environmentally sound technologies, notwithstanding the need for developed countries to improve access by developing countries to environmentally sound technologies.

Rio de Janeiro opened a new chapter in cooperation between national Governments and private enterprise. It will be the duty of every Government to generate incentives that will promote private sector investments generating environmentally sound manufacturing and waste disposal. The basic challenge will be for Governments to design environmental policies that set high and truly competitive standards. Protectionism, or its threat, disguised as environmental sustainability, runs the risk of generating selectivity and undermining sovereignty in the enforcement of environmental standards, especially in sensitive areas, such as trade in tropical timber.

(Mr. Musuka, Zambia)

The emerging change towards sustainable development offers unprecedented opportunities. Our world body has a crucial opportunity to improve and strengthen the Secretariat and intergovernmental structures as we evolve institutional arrangements to underpin the long-term involvement of the United Nations in integrating environment and development. It is my delegation's hope that agencies like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) will also develop reforms complementary to the efforts we are undertaking at this session of the General Assembly.

The international community also has a timely and unprecedented opportunity to initiate a concerted attack on poverty and meet basic human needs in addition to empowering billions of people world wide to lead productive lives.

In all these opportunities, and innumerable others, the manner in which the international community will harness the spirit of compromise and commitment to change will define the possibilities of making meaningful use of the opportunities for preserving the integrity of the environment. The road to Rio identified opportunities and difficulties. Rio itself developed new values which the international community has to build upon. It will be possible to do so if the international community invokes the human spirit to survive.

Mr. NYAKYI (United Republic of Tanzania): It is a great pleasure for my delegation to address the General Assembly on the very important item on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

My delegation listened very carefully to the statement made yesterday by the Secretary-General on the restructuring of the United Nations and on the

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necessary follow-up, with additional arrangements, to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The statement gives us a sense of his commitment to the building of a United Nations which is responsive to the needs and aspirations of the peoples of the world - not just in the economic and social fields, but in all other areas of human endeavour. I thank the Secretary-General for a very inspiring address. I should also like to thank the delegation of Pakistan for its statement. My delegation fully endorses the statement delivered yesterday by Mr. Akram Zaki, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, who spoke also on behalf of the Group of 77.

The Rio Conference was the culmination of a 20-year campaign of sensitizing the world community and persuading it that environmental problems are global in nature, that their solution will thus require an international consensus, and that to ascertain the sustainable existence of our fragile planet Earth requires the integration of developmental and environmental programmes. That is what Agenda 21 endeavours to do. It is a commitment by States to establish a new global partnership in order to engage in a continuous dialogue inspired by the need to achieve a more efficient and equitable world economy and by the imperative of protecting the environment. It is therefore the responsibility of the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session to build on the impetus which was created at Rio by establishing strong and effective follow-up institutional arrangements.

The painstaking efforts devoted to the intricate process of negotiation which characterized the UNCED process from the first session of the Preparatory Committee through the fourth session and the intergovernmental

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negotiating process for the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity is a clear demonstration of the international community's interest in, and according of priority to the issue of environment and development. The 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment was a conference which brought together industrialized and developing nations to delineate the rights of the human family to a healthy and productive environment. The Rio Conference defined actions which humankind has resolved to take for its sustainable survival in a healthy environment. This means that unless Agenda 21 is implemented in its entirety the whole exercise which led to Rio will have been futile.

It is now almost five months since we departed from the beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro, satisfied that we had successfully negotiated an agenda which will deliver us into the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, it appears as if not all the square brackets placed around the means of implementation during the preparatory process were removed by the Conference. The developed countries have yet to make concrete pledges which will commit them to the implementation of Agenda 21.

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, agreed at the Conference, has not been translated by States into a concrete resolve to play their part in this endeavour. The challenge remains to translate the concepts negotiated and agreements reached in Rio into workable strategies and policy measures. Despite the unpromising start, we in the South remain optimistic that the North will honour its commitment to reach the accepted United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of its gross national product for official development assistance, and we hope that those countries which have not yet reached that target will augment their aid programmes in order to do

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so as soon as possible. We welcome the recent initiative by some countries in the North to cancel their debts to developing countries. Similarly, we welcome the United Nations Development Programme's innovative mechanism entitled "Capacity 21", aimed at supporting developing countries in their efforts to implement Agenda 21. We see the mechanism as paving the way for creative initiatives by the donor community and multilateral financial institutions as a whole.

Principle 4 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development states that:

> "In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it."

Today, nearly half of the people of Africa live in abject poverty. The number of the poor in Africa is projected to increase by more than 100 million by the end of the century, at a time when the number of the poor in the entire world is expected to decline by 400 million. This will mean that by the end of the century Africa will account for more than 30 per cent of all the poor of the developing world.

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

This is an emergency situation. In relation to Africa, when we talk about combating poverty, organizing the transfer of resources and technology, assisting in capacity-building, protecting and promoting human health and promoting sustainable human settlement, we are talking of things that should happen now. The real work must begin now in order to ensure that the two years' difficult negotiations are converted into constructive action. As Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway rightly stated at Rio,

"Poverty degrades not only those who suffer it but also those who tolerate it."

The mandate that is given in paragraph 38.12 of Agenda 21 to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session places on this body a heavy responsibility - namely, to determine specific organizational modalities for the work of the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development. The attention of Governments, experts, non-governmental organizations and all others who participated in the UNCED process is firmly focused on our deliberations and conclusions at this session of the General Assembly, and it should be our endeavour to ensure that we meet their expectations. As Agenda 21 is expected both to address the pressing problems of today and to prepare the world for the challenges of the next century, the post-UNCED institutional framework that we are in the process of creating should embody the dynamism and flexibility necessary to last through the twenty-first century.

My delegation believes that, following UNCED, the United Nations has a unique opportunity to assume a leadership role in advancing the process of integrating environment and development in order to attain sustainable

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development. We are embarking on the task of creating a post-UNCED institutional framework at an opportune time - a time when the United Nations is undergoing a process of restructuring and revitalization in the economic, social and related fields. As the only universal and democratic intergovernmental Organization capable of playing a pivotal role in coordinating the macroeconomic policies of Member States at the global level, as embodied in the Charter, the United Nations can make a decisive contribution to the successful implementation of Agenda 21.

The post-UNCED institutional framework should be used as a means of striving to strengthen the United Nations system so that it is not marginalized or denied its proper role as the international community's pre-eminent deliberative and legislative body. After the collapse of the cold war, which for nearly 50 years paralysed the Organization's machinery, the United Nations can now start not only to play the role envisaged in the Charter with regard to conflict management and the provision of humanitarian assistance but also to discharge its Charter functions in the economic, social and related spheres.

We could not agree more fully with the former UNCED Secretary-General's comment that the fact that the Earth Summit - the largest-ever gathering of Heads of State or Government - was convened by the United Nations is of profound significance. That it marks a turning-point in the history of the United Nations system justifies recognition of the United Nations as the only forum where the world community can unite for the common good. My delegation looks forward to cooperating with other delegations to ensure that this momentum is not lost.

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

Agenda 21 indicates keen consciousness of the fact that both economic policies of individual countries and international economic relations have great relevance to sustainable development. It is also clear that sound macroeconomic and environmental policies have a positive environmental impact. A large number of developing countries, including Tanzania, are undertaking structural adjustment and other reforms. The process of integrating environmental components into our national planning system is ongoing. But the international climate has continued to be unpromising for developing countries as interest rates have remained high and as commodity prices, in real terms, have fallen to their lowest level since the great depression of the 1930s.

The external debt of developing countries continues to weigh negatively, and servicing it has led to the perverse phenomenon of the reverse flow of resources from the developing world to the developed countries. Improvement, as gauged by such indicators as life expectancy and infant mortality, has slowed down. Education and health programmes have been adversely affected by economic difficulties and by the need for cuts in public expenditure as a part of adjustment programmes.

The Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, which started in 1986, has not made much progress. A successful conclusion to the Uruguay Round could do much to improve the international-trade environment and contribute to economic recovery. A more open, transparent and rule-based system would help to provide developing countries with better market access and increased opportunity for export growth.

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

The General Assembly has a responsibility at this session to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries - particularly countries in Africa - that are experiencing serious drought or desertification. We have come a long way, through tedious negotiations, to the present happy stage of establishing an intergovernmental negotiating committee. It is our sincere hope that the convention will be finalized by the target date of 1994. We request the Secretary-General to establish as soon as possible, for the purpose of maintaining the momentum, an ad hoc secretariat to assist the intergovernmental negotiating committee in the pursuit of its mandate. We also urge relevant organizations in the United Nations system that deal with drought, desertification and development to share their knowledge and experience with the committee.

I should like at this juncture to turn to the modalities for the establishment of the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development. The purpose of designating the Commission as a high-level body was, first, to establish that the proposed institution would be strong, effective and capable of carrying out its functions as envisaged in Agenda 21 and, secondly, to ensure that representation would be at the highest possible level. We understand that it may not be possible for countries, especially developing countries, to be represented at ministerial level in all the Commission's deliberations, but every effort should be made to ensure representation at the highest possible level. This will greatly facilitate and speed up the work of the Commission and will make possible the quick implementation of its decisions by the avoidance of tedious bureaucratic red tape.

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

Membership of the Commission should take account of the great importance attached to its mandate and of the unprecedented interest that its work has aroused among the Members of the United Nations. Anything less than the maximum permitted under Article 68 would not be adequate. In accordance with established practice, membership should be based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. We also agree with the view, expressed by the Secretary-General in his report, that the Commission on Sustainable Development should encourage the participation of non-governmental organizations, including industry and the business and scientific communities, in accordance with the rules and procedures adopted during the UNCED process.

My delegation welcomes the proposal for the establishment of a high-level advisory body on sustainable development consisting of eminent persons. We believe that that body too should be appointed on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, taking into account the need for broad knowledge and experience of environmental and development issues.

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

Noting the important role of women in development and therefore their indispensable contribution to successful implementation of Agenda 21, my delegation believes that the Assembly has an obligation to ensure a realistic gender balance and not merely go in for tokenism in regard to the composition of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the high-level advisory body and the Commission's secretariat.

Besides generally monitoring progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Commission should have as its main functions reviewing progress in the implementation of the commitments in Agenda 21, including those related to provision of financial resources and transfer of technology, and regularly reviewing the adequacy of funding and mechanisms, including efforts to reach the agreed objectives of Agenda 21.

The Commission on Sustainable Development should ensure effective follow-up to UNCED and provide an essential forum for on-going North-South dialogue on environment and development issues. The Commission should consider reports and information provided by Governments, international institutions and United Nations agencies regarding their activities to implement Agenda 21 and the problems they face. It should also be in a position to review the operations and activities of the United Nations specialized agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and of trade and related conferences, and it must be able to recommend action on the basis of these reports.

Last but not least, the Commission's operations must be transparent, accessible and accountable to United Nations Member States and the public at the national, regional and international levels.

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

Our journey to Rio and deliberations at the Earth Summit were extremely successful. In setting out on the road from Rio, we have no option but to implement effectively chapter 33 relating to financial resources and mechanisms, and chapter 34, on the transfer of environmentally sound technology and capacity-building, of Agenda 21. It is our sincere hope that at the conclusion of our deliberations on this agenda item, we may have a sense of the terrain through which the road from Rio will take us.

Mr. KARUKUBIRO KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda): The Earth Summit recently concluded in Rio de Janeiro laid down important areas of commitment in the field of environment and development. The Assembly at this forty-seventh session is expected to put in place the necessary institutional mechanism to follow up the achievements of that Summit and look into possible ways of making further progress. The United Nations and its family of agencies are thus expected to lead the way forward, to ensure that the goals of Rio are achieved.

Agenda 21 stands as the most comprehensive framework for attaining the objective of sustainable development. It responds to the understanding that our planet Earth can no longer sustain a human species caught between the desperation of the poor, whose bid to survive drives them towards its destruction, and the unrestrained appetite of the rich, whose consumption patterns have become unsustainable. The clarion call from Agenda 21 is that all nations of the world must now join in a global partnership for sustainable development. The focus from now on must be on sustainability and continuity.

In Rio, from the perspective of developing countries came the objectives of reducing poverty, attaining economic growth and managing the environment.

(Mr. Karukubiro Kamunanwire, Uganda)

The thrust of Agenda 21 is that measures adopted to protect the environment should not be at the expense of the development process. Developing countries must have the legitimate right to utilize their natural resources for their own development. Preservation of the ecosystem and the promotion of concerted management of sustainable development must go hand in hand. This means that environmental questions must be integrated into the broader issue of sustainable development in its social and economic sense. This also calls for a new responsibility: while we set out on the path of sustainable development, we should also take cognizance of the impact of our policies that might be detrimental to those around us and beyond.

In developing countries the difficulty in coping with environmental problems has been exacerbated by poverty. Natural disasters, such as the drought and famine which have brought havoc to most parts of southern and eastern Africa, with disastrous consequences for crops and with loss of life, exemplify our incapacity to cope with these problems. This terrible incapacity, coupled with lack of awareness of the inevitable consequences of exhausting our fragile resources, have been in part responsible for the ecological disasters.

In our case, therefore, given the over-reliance of our economies on agriculture, the case can be made that the concept of sustainable development for the present can only start from the application of sustainable agricultural productivity. Agricultural production can be sustained on a long-term basis only if the resource base - land, water and forests - is not degraded. Agricultural production should then be able to rediversify into new crops and new agro-industries.

(Mr. Karukubiro Kamunanwire, Uganda)

It follows, therefore, that human resource capabilities necessary for implementation of sustainable development programmes must be one of the top priorities. Practical steps to provide access to environmentally efficient technologies will be a necessary complement to this critical area and must be given equal priority. International cooperation is required to assist developing countries in the framework of meeting the demands of Agenda 21.

The larger question, however, still remains: how can developing countries be expected to cope with the myriad environmental problems facing their fledgling economies? Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest per capita debt ratio in the world.

(Mr. Karukubiro Kamunanwire, Uganda)

Debt-servicing alone has come to penalize the region's economic growth and its capacity to protect the environment. As a result, it is not uncommon to see natural resources being overexploited in order to increase production in the effort to get export earnings to pay for the unending debts.

It is therefore evident that implementation of the programmes under Agenda 21 will require enormous resources. Yet throughout the UNCED process and out of Rio, no clear commitment has emerged in this critical area so far. It should be pointed out that the pledge to commit 0.7 percent of gross national product to development assistance was actually first made in 1980, almost 12 years ago, and has since been repeated year after year. Only a few devoted countries have been able to demonstrate their commitment to assisting developing countries since this pledge was made. But for the majority of the developed countries in a position to assist, if the pledge made in 1980 has remained largely unfulfilled, how can we be sure that this will now be honoured and met by the year 2000, as was pledged in Rio de Janeiro?

Those who have indicated that they will pay their contributions through the Global Environment Facility will be missing the mark. It is now a matter of common knowledge that most of the programmes under Agenda 21 could not possibly fit into the constitution of the Global Environment Facility. Essentially, if the goals of Agenda 21 are to be met, it will be necessary for the Global Environment Facility to be restructured so as to meet both the requirements of Agenda 21 and the format of representation.

As constituted today, governance and management of the Global Environment Facility is hardly representative of developing countries. Its method of operation has yet to be made transparent. Fundamentally, there is need to

(Mr. Karukubiro Kamunanwire, Uganda)

review its criteria for selecting programmes if the programmes of Agenda 21 are to fit in its scheme of funding. The Global Environment Facility must therefore do more to demonstrate its commitment in fulfilment of the provisions of Agenda 21.

Implementation of Agenda 21 is going to be a country-driven process. Many developing countries are now in the process of drawing up their action plans for the implementation of Agenda 21, which will involve drawing up priorities and time-tables for their implementation. Given the conditions of abject poverty and chronic deprivation in many developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, there is no way countries of the region can be expected to come up with resources of their own for the implementation of the programmes of Agenda 21. New and additional funding will be required to support developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development, and to be able to participate meaningfully in measures to obviate global risks.

It is in this regard that Uganda wishes to reiterate here what we have often stated in different forums - that the starting-point for the raising of financial resources for Agenda 21 must be a programme that will release resources from these categories: first, the cancellation of all official bilateral debts; secondly, the cancellation of all commercial debts procured under arrangements of import-export guarantees; and, thirdly, with the support of donor countries, the cancellation of all debt owed to multilateral financial institutions, which for countries in sub-Saharan Africa constitute the bulk of external indebtedness. These actions should be complemented by the provision of new and additional resources for the implementation of

(Mr. Karukubiro Kamunanwire, Uganda)

Agenda 21. These measures will no doubt provide resources for a head-start in the implementation of Agenda 21.

This forty-seventh session of the General Assembly was mandated to set up a high-level commission on sustainable development that will oversee the implementation of programmes under Aqenda 21. The most critical element for the yet to be established commission will be its coordinating functions. The United Nations system must play a leading role by ensuring that its various bodies and agencies cooperate in an integrated way in the implementation of the programmes of Agenda 21.

To be able to function effectively, the Commission on Sustainable Development will need to be supported by a strong and effective secretariat. The secretariat will have to be headed by a person of sufficient knowledge and seniority, appointed by the Secretary-General.

A lot of hope is therefore pinned on the Commission on Sustainable Development yet to be established. Through it, we hope to see Agenda 21 implemented with vigour and vitality in the integration of environment and development.

Mr. KOKEYEV (Russian Federation) (interpretation from Russian): In the wake of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was called for, and which became a watershed in the life of the international community, for the first time we are to address environment issues in the context of sustainable development, giving questions related to protection of the environment priority, instead of treating them as ancillary matters, and integrating them into all areas of United Nations activities.

(Mr. Kokeyev, Russian Federation)

As this debate confirms, it is no secret that the results of the Rio de Janeiro forum are viewed with different degrees of optimism in different countries, which is only natural. Diversity of opinion is an essential element of a creative search for consensus and its practical implementation. In Rio a sound foundation was laid for a complex and lengthy process of harmonizing the movements of States through unexplored terrain towards the historically unprecedented objective of sustainable development as both a prerequisite for, and the final objective of, the strengthening of universal security, of a new partnership now at last being removed from the tethers of polemics and ideology.

The large picture can only be seen from a distance. Less than five months after the Conference, I am sure that the scale of its achievements has not yet been fully comprehended. But even now one can see that a code of rules of sustainable development has emerged in the form of the Rio Declaration. While perhaps the text itself may not be sufficiently polished due to lack of time, the work proposed by the Secretary-General in his Rio address may well be continued with a view to its completion in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. It is important that these efforts be generated in advance, on a well thought-through organizational and practical basis.

(Mr. Kokeyev, Russian Federation)

Further, we now have Agenda 21 embodying a concrete programme of joint action by States in the interests of sustainable development. This programme defines both the most important tasks and directions of cooperation and the technological, financial and organizational mechanisms for implementing it. Obviously, success will depend, decisively, on efforts at the national level; but for the first time it has become possible to integrate these efforts into economic policies at all levels.

I would also like to emphasize that we attach special importance to coordination of existing and new mechanisms, to ensure that in practice sustainable development and environmental issues are brought from the fringes to the forefront of the activities of the United Nations, its General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, with a secretariat to which clear functions are assigned and adequate personnel and resources allocated, should become an important instrument for evaluating the implementation of the Rio decisions and for continuing dialogue initiated at the Conference. To ensure the effective work of the Commission, it is important to maintain the momentum built up during preparation for the Conference. Establishing the optimal organizational framework for the Commission's future effective work is one of the cardinal tasks before the Assembly under this agenda item. The Secretary-General's report and his statement in this forum contain very interesting and wise considerations to this effect and should be heeded in our work.

It would also be useful, in our opinion, to take a decision in principle on putting the work of the Environmental Centre for Urgent Assistance onto a permanent basis.

(Mr. Kokeyev, Russian Federation)

The scope of global environmental issues covered by international legal agreements has expanded significantly. Conventions on climate and biological diversity have been signed, reflecting the interests of all countries, including those with transitional economies. Principles governing the management, preservation and development of all types of forests have been agreed upon with a view to concluding a relevant convention. Preparations have been initiated for negotiations on a convention on combating desertification. There is another factor too. The new global partnership that was born in Rio has already encompassed the interaction of governmental and non-governmental structures, joint efforts aimed at promoting environmental education with the wide and active participation of all major population groups.

Thus the Rio Conference has accomplished much - the maximum possible in today's circumstances, it might be said - and the pivotal task is perceived to lie in managing this formidable treasure pragmatically, without a maximalist "all-or-nothing" approach, without egoism, prejudice and suspicion, but with a readiness to bolster the concept and practices of sustainable - that is, environmentally feasible - development.

Russia, despite all the difficulties of its transition to a market economy, has demonstrated such readiness. A new confirmation of this is to be found in the "National Report on the Condition of the Environment of the Russian Federation in 1991", recently published in Moscow.

One of the features of the report is its impartiality. The document points openly to the unsatisfactory condition of the human environment in Russia. Environmental deterioration, in particular contamination by harmful substances, continues. The report states that the substantial decline in

(Mr. Kokeyev, Russian Federation)

production in 1991 has not resulted in an adequate improvement of the environmental situation. In 84 Russian cities, repeatedly and sometimes regularly, atmospheric contamination levels were recorded at a level 10 or more times higher than the maximum concentration allowed by sanitary norms. Today, critical ecological conditions prevail in 13 regions, with a total area of 2.5 million square kilometers, or almost 15 per cent of Russia's territory.

However, another virtue of the report is that it is not restricted simply to recording existing problems. The document objectively describes the growing number of positive signs that are mostly associated with the adoption on 19 December 1991 of the comprehensive market-oriented law "On the protection of the natural environment". The introduction by the Russian Government of fines for polluting the environment has heightened the role of environmental criteria applicable to norms and standards that are a vital part of the mechanism ensuring the efficient implementation of environmental protection legislation. To monitor the implementation of this legislation, more than 267,000 enterprises and organizations were screened last year.

The same spirit of balanced and thoughtful analysis permeates environmental forecasts aimed at taking appropriate preventive measures. The proposed complex of priority measures - legal, organizational and economic - intended to prevent a worsening of the environmental situation in the country during the next two or three years is designed to create an efficient legal and economic basis for strengthening environmental security. The task is set to work out a new State policy to lay an efficient foundation for stable economic development based on the maintenance of the required parameters of

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the natural environment and a careful use of natural resources. Among the main lines of this policy is the elaboration of a new legal and economic mechanism for governing the interaction between State bodies at various levels and users of natural resources, as well as the inclusion of environmental requirements in assessing the social and economic efficiency and consequences of managerial decisions. A series of measures are envisaged to ensure environmental safety on local, regional and global levels in full accordance with international agreements and conventions in force. The document proposes to initiate the elaboration and implementation of ad hoc State programmes of environmental protection and efficient use of natural resources; it recognizes the active participation of all strata of the population and all social groups in the environmentalization of the economic reforms under way as an absolute condition of the efficient implementation of environmental policy. The task is set to elaborate an efficient mechanism to implement the right of each citizen - and I stress, each citizen - to participate in the adoption of decisions that affect his or her interests; to receive compensation for health damage due to environmental pollution or other harmful effects; and to receive swift, accurate and analytical information on the state of the natural environment and on the quality of drinking water and food products.

It is not difficult to see that the measures envisaged are fully compatible with the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, with the letter and spirit of the Rio Declaration, with Agenda 21; they form a natural part of our resolve to implement the recommendations of this forum.

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The understanding and solidarity of the international community and a favourable attitude on its part towards our problems, requirements and capacities in the period of transition are of especial importance to us in the realization of these endeavors. The Russian delegation will do everything at this session to strengthen the new global partnership, to imbue it with more concrete meaning and to transform it into the driving force of qualitatively new United Nations activities in the economic, environmental and social fields.

We are grateful to all the enthusiasts of the Earth Summit, including the secretariat of the Conference. In particular we salute its Secretary-General, Mr. Morris Strong, who is also a special adviser to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and head of the prominent company Ontario-Hydro - for his steadfast and active commitment to the ideals of our Organization.

This is a further manifestation of the unity between word and deed, between the concept and the practice of sustainable development. It is such unity that is capable of ensuring the implementation of the greatest possible proportion of Agenda 21, even in this century, of making sustainable development a reality and of bringing closer the time when the great achievements in the field of environmental protection and development, as a valuable contribution to the strengthening of peace, will be assessed by the world community at their true value and will come to the notice of the Nobel Prize Committee. When this will happen depends on all of us, in my opinion.

Mr. ELIASHIV (Israel): Our delegation joins in the debate to express its great interest in the follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). We look forward to the concrete results of these deliberations and their implementation, which should meet the aspirations of mankind.

We have read the comprehensive reports of UNCED and of the Secretary-General, and we listened with great interest to the Secretary-General's incisive statement focusing on the crucial issues before us as well as on the restructuring of the United Nations system.

Israel brings to this dialogue its belief in the frontier direction of human history, its conviction that progress and sustainable development, not predetermined repetition, is the law of life.

It has been our view for many years now that the gap in standards and capacities between the rich and poor nations is still a greater threat to universal peace and a stronger affront to man's dignity than any threat arising from the admitted neglect of ecological prudence and restraint. Our solutions must come to terms with industrialization and technical advances. The scientific inheritance is not going to be the monopoly of those countries which are fortunate. The aim is to find a positive reconciliation between development and the preservation of man's natural legacy.

There can be no real, long-term solution to the poverty problem unless environmental concerns are properly integrated into all development activities. A global, integrated approach should encompass human development, protection of the environment, social and demographic problems, vocational training, health and education for all, transfer of technology and eradication of poverty. This inextricable link between environment and sustainable development was indeed recognized in Rio.

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In Stockholm 20 years ago the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment aroused impressive universal ecological awareness. The Earth Summit in Rio marks the beginning of action. The main success of Rio lies in the fact that it managed to lay down new important commitments for environment and development cooperation. As was strongly emphasized in Rio, the environment is an integral part of sustainable development and cannot be viewed in isolation.

Agenda 21 certainly opened up new vistas for attaining the objective of sustainable development. It is incumbent upon us to continue to build on the momentum of international cooperation on the environment and sustainable development. We must create a new sense of partnership for the future. We must translate the words of the Agenda into deeds. We owe it to our children and grandchildren. A great deal of responsibility lies with the new Commission on Sustainable Development, which is to be established to become a primary forum for international cooperation and action.

Israel is especially sensitive to the fragility of the environment and development, because our country's rebirth is a continuous ecological drama of rehabilitating a scarred, eroded, denuded landscape, of redeeming fertile valleys degraded into buzzing malarial swamps, and of reversing the rapacity and neglect which had created the desert.

There are few examples in the literature of national movements of such compassion for a suffering landscape. This solicitude is deepened by a religious tradition which thousands of years ago enacted laws that land should lie fallow every seventh year and that domestic animals should be the objects of humane care. In our own day Israel, which now uses 100 per cent of its

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available fresh water, has given a unique emphasis to conservation, purification and desalination under strict centralized control.

But the central gift of Israel's experience to the hope of environmental improvement lies in the Negev adventure. Believing that the desert is man's creation and not the inexorable decree of history, we have launched a campaign against aridity with results that are being shared with other nations of the world. We can avoid each other's errors and emulate each other's successes. Nothing is more urgent than a programme of environmental information, compilation, dissemination and monitoring under international auspices.

Nearly every problem has a possible technological or scientific solution, provided that there is a desire to solve it and to make financial means available. Solutions are viable only if they are conceived and put into effect on a global scale. The United Nations may recapture much of its prestige and resonance if it gives first priority to those predicaments which have global dimensions.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres, said in his statement to the General Assembly on 1 October 1992,

> "The United Nations must be the headquarters for an all-embracing struggle to safeguard the environment against new threats. It must be a powerhouse to arrest starvation." (A/47/PV.20, p. 46)

Indeed, it seems that as a result of a world-wide concern it has finally been established that the environment is no longer an exclusive item on the agenda of rich nations. Threats to the environment make no distinction between nations and continents, and in order to combat them successfully a global approach is necessary. No country may be exempt from this effort, and each one, large or small, rich or poor, must contribute in facing the challenge to

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the extent of its capabilities. An overall willingness to share knowledge, expertise, experience and resources must also prevail, so as to make this campaign for the protection of our planet truly global.

The Earth Summit in Rio agreed on a framework for global sharing of responsibility for the well-being of our planet. While general awareness and policies must be outlined on a global level, special importance should be attributed to regional cooperation in solving the problems of common interest. In this respect, the Mediterranean Action Plan, of which we are proud to be an active member, may serve as an excellent example. Much of what has been achieved would not have been possible if dealt with on an individual national basis. The shores of Israel and those of other Mediterranean countries, to mention just one example, would not have become cleaner without a concerted effort by all Member States.

We face the challenge of the future with the certainty that protection of the environment is not contrary to development, that in fact environment and development achievements will be in vain if we are unable to integrate with development in all sectors.

Technology is a key element in sustainable development and it must be carefully selected with a view to adapting it to the specific needs of each developing country. Technological change holds the promise of meaningful medium- and long-term programmes towards sustainable development and environment. Research and development in the use of solar energy has been and is a major field of endeavour in Israel. Solar energy industrialization and uses of biomass have already been proved cost-effective. We are also concentrating on several projects for the utilization of solar energy for agricultural and industrial purposes.

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As part of the international effort to protect the environment, a group of more than a hundred Israeli companies are engaged in extensive research in order to develop sophisticated and innovative technologies that are export-oriented.

A few of the areas of activity are reducing jet-plane noise, devising anti-pollution measures against chemical gases and biological pollutants, identifying poisonous substances in water, improving the removal of oil spills in the sea and converting crop-sprays into benign materials.

We believe that such environmental technologies, which we are willing to share with other developing countries, could play an important role in the global effort to achieve sustainable development. These interrelated issues are certainly relevant to the implementation of Agenda 21.

Our research is adapted to the peculiar requirements of our area, and it is linked to the very extensive development that has taken place in Israel in the use of water resources and in processes to desalinate sea water and brackish water in the desert. All this research and development, which includes the highest degree of water control in the world, is directed towards turning arid deserts into green, fruitful, food-bearing soil.

Desertification affects the lives and well-being of 2.7 billion people. All of us who are concerned about the environment must redouble our efforts to eradicate desertification. It is our belief that today's scientific skills and developing technology offer hope of facing this problem and converting arid zones into habitable and productive ones.

The National Desert Research Institute, at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, is engaged in research and development on arid zones and in particular the conversion of the desert into a productive environment. The scope of the

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Institute's activities transcends Israel's borders, for much of its research has world-wide significance. It is our aim to share our experience and know-how with any country. The Middle East possesses vast desert land but meagre water resources. The desert can be turned into green, fertile land. The experience and technology is available, water can be reused, and new, fresh water can be produced from the sea.

From a historical point of view, man's endeavours to settle the desert and his attempts to extract a livelihood from the barren land are as ancient as man himself. The Biblical Prophet Isaiah gave expression to these endeavours when he said:

"The wilderness and the arid land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the tulip." (The Holy Bible, Isaiah 35:1)

It is obvious that a plan of action on an international scale is needed in order to combat desertification. Therefore, in this context we welcome the suggested establishment of a framework to draft a convention, and we hope that such action will be taken expeditiously.

The human factor is no less central to development in bringing about the effective involvement of the population and in implementing national policies. Therefore, increased attention will have to be directed to human resources, sustainable development and the transfer of training and technology. We have placed a great deal of emphasis on the development of human resources, which has become the key to the country's technological expansion and a marked feature of its extensive technical and economic cooperation with other countries.

The importance of adequate funding mechanisms cannot be overemphasized, for they represent the key to environmental protection. In the past decades

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the World Bank, the regional development banks and other international institutions have achieved laudable success in promoting development in agriculture, industry, education, health and social welfare in countless developing nations. They can exercise the same skill in fostering environmentally sound development.

We must strengthen the capability of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to finance environmental programmes of concern to all nations. The December meeting in Cote d'Ivoire should lead to the restructuring of GEF, as agreed in Rio, to become operational before the end of 1993.

International organizations should play a transitional role in the developing world while the various nations are building a national infrastructure for environmental administration. In Rio our delegation proposed that the United Nations Development Programme network could be drafted into the service of the environment, and my delegation is pleased to note that the Administrator has already taken action to this effect.

Non-governmental environmental organizations should be given our support. It is our hope that they will continue to serve as catalysts for environmental improvement.

We welcome the agreement reached in Rio on the institutional arrangements to follow up UNCED, and in particular the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Follow-up to UNCED should be fully incorporated into the ongoing revitalization of the United Nations economic and social sectors, thus ensuring that the UNCED recommendations are integrated into the United Nations operational activities.

We support the view that the central purpose of the Commission should be to provide an appropriate intergovernmental forum for the exchange of

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information about national and multilateral experiences. We must ensure not only that the Commission will be an efficient and effective body, but also that it will represent the national interests of all nations, so as to ensure genuine international cooperation. In deciding the composition and membership of the Commission, we should take into consideration the principle of universality. We support the view that Member States that are not members of the Commission should have the right to participate fully in its deliberations as observers.

As we have mentioned before, regional cooperation is an essential element for the implementation of environmental action. All agree that environmental problems know no boundaries; nevertheless, conflicts and disputes all over the world prevent genuine cooperation.

The Middle East holds tremendous potential for economic development. A variety of joint and multilateral projects for economic cooperation would be of mutual benefit and would enhance the well-being of all parties. We are currently engaged in bilateral negotiations to bring an end to the conflicts of the past and in multilateral negotiations to lay the foundations for the future.

During the recent multilateral talks in the framework of the Middle East peace process, Israel presented detailed and concrete proposals on projects for regional cooperation and development in the fields of, inter alia, arid-zone agricultural development, a centre for combating desertification, alternate sources of energy, desalination technology and protection of the environment. Those projects mean not only cooperation, but also, and above all, confidence-building and progress towards peace.

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The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development stipulates in Principle 25 that

"Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible."

It is our desire and vision that peace should eventually embrace all neighbouring countries, so that we can achieve a comprehensive settlement in our region that will enable us to live together with equality, trust and mutual respect, thus making it possible for all people and nations in our area to devote and dedicate their efforts, resources and energies to social and economic development through genuine cooperation - for peace and prosperity are indivisible.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.